

sion that have taken too much of the life-blood of this country already. Shortly before he died, the late Cardinal Bernardin, who Hillary and I had the privilege to know and revere, gave a remarkable speech about reconciling the conflicts within the Catholic Church over great issues in a way that would permit people to disagree honestly to try to preserve reconciliation. And he said this, knowing that his death was imminent: "It is wrong to waste the precious gift of time given to us on acrimony and division."

My fellow Americans, for all the problems of this country, we have been given more from God than any nation in history. And at this moment in history, we have more opportunities and more responsibilities than ever before. To make this democracy work, we must create a vital and dynamic center that is a place of action. We cannot waste the precious gift of this moment.

You have worked hard to create that vital center. Anchored by our oldest convictions, strengthened by our newest successes, certain of our national purpose, let us go forward from that center to build our bridge to the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. at the Sheraton Washington Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Bernard Schwartz, event chairman; Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado; Al From, executive director, Democratic Leadership Council; and Mark Penn and Doug Schoen of Penn + Schoen Associates.

### **Message on the Observance of Christmas 1996**

*December 11, 1996*

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Christmas.

Each year during this blessed season, the world pauses to look back across the centuries to the birth of a Child. This Child was born to poor but loving parents in the small town of Bethlehem—born into a world where few noticed His coming, except for some simple shepherds and a few wise men. He was the Son of God and the King of Kings, but He chose to come among us as servant and Savior.

Though two thousand years have passed since Jesus first walked the earth, much remains the same. Today's world is still caught up in the challenges and cares of everyday existence, and too often we crowd God into the background of our experience. Too often we still ignore His loving presence in our lives and the precious gifts of peace and hope that He so freely offers to us all. And today, as on that first Christmas morning, He still reveals himself to the loving, the wise, and the simple of heart.

As we gather with family and friends again this year to celebrate Christmas, let us welcome God wholeheartedly into our daily lives. Let us learn to recognize Him not only in the faces of our loved ones, but also in the faces of those who, like Jesus, are familiar with poverty, hardship, and rejection. And let us be inspired by His example to serve one another with generous hearts and open hands. In this way we will approach the dawn of a new century and a new millennium confident in God's abundant grace and strengthened by His timeless promise of salvation.

Hillary joins me in praying that the peace and joy of this holiday season will remain with you throughout the coming year. Merry Christmas, and God bless you.

**Bill Clinton**

### **Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 1996**

*December 11, 1996*

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Kwanzaa.

The hearts of millions of men and women across America and around the world rejoice as together we enter into the spirit of this uplifting holiday. The seven principles of Kwanzaa—unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith—teach us that when we come together to strengthen our families and communities and honor the lessons of the past, we can face the future with joy and optimism. Through prayer, song, and the exchange of gifts, Kwanzaa helps us celebrate the human experience and appreciate our many blessings.